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### UM law school team sweeps regional competition

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## NEWS RELEASE

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March 8, 2001

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### UM LAW SCHOOL TEAM SWEEPS REGIONAL COMPETITION

#### MISSOULA-

The University of Montana's law school trial team won back their title as regional champions at the National Student Trial Advocacy Competition, held March 4 in Phoenix, Ariz.

Four students from UM's School of Law successfully presented a medical negligence case in the mock trial competition, which qualifies the team to compete in the national finals on March 22 in New Orleans. The competitions are sponsored by the Association of Trial Lawyers of America.

UM's varsity trial team comprises third-year law students Vu Pham of **Seattle**, Maryann Ries of **Conrad**, and Bryce Floch of **Lewiston, Idaho**, plus first-year law student Neel Hammond of **Billings**. Coaches are law Professor Cynthia Ford and Karen Townsend, Missoula deputy county attorney.

Pham, whose family fled Saigon when he was 5, and Ries, a former Conrad justice of the peace and mother of five, acted as lawyers in the mock case, while Floch and Hammond were witnesses. Hammond, a physician-turned-law-student, portrayed an emergency room doctor on the stand.

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The case focused on a boy who died after an emergency medical technician failed to diagnose his juvenile onset diabetes. Teams are judged on their skill in case preparation, opening statements, use of facts, examination of witnesses and closing arguments.

Montana defeated a University of Idaho team to win the regional competition, which included 16 teams from 10 law schools, including the University of California, Berkeley; Arizona State University; and the University of Denver. The top two winners from each of 12 regional competitions will advance to the national finals.

"We are a relatively unknown law school on the national scene, but time and time again our students prove that a small group yields terrific talent," said Ford, who has coached the team for 11 years. "There's certainly nobody smarter than us, and no one who works harder. And no one who has more fun doing this."

The UM team won four preliminary rounds against teams from Whittier College, the University of Wyoming, Case Western Reserve University and the University of Idaho. Each round has three judges, all of whom voted unanimously for Montana in four of the five rounds.

UM's junior varsity team also performed well in the competition, where they were among the top eight teams who made it to the elimination rounds. Montana teams historically have ranked high, going to the national championship seven times in 13 years and winning it in 1992.

UM's trial team is sponsored by Wade Dahood and the **Anaconda** law firm of Knight, Dahood, McLean & Everett, and by Billings lawyer A. Clifford Edwards. The team also receives support from the Montana Trial Lawyers Association and the Montana Defense Trial Lawyers Association.

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Local, Montana Lawyer, Billings Gazette, Billings Outpost, Choteau Acantha, Conrad Independent-Observer, Montana Standard, Anaconda Leader, Lewiston (Idaho) Tribune.  
LawTeam.rl